

A DEFENSE

OF

OPEN AIR PREACHING.

To the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church :

FATHERS AND BRETHERN :

I think I am not mistaken in believing that the matters here discussed are of more than local interest. The very local coloring of this discourse may not be without its value, both to help the interest of the Church at large in its missionary work, and as a little contribution to its documentary history. Trinity Church, Natchitoches, though small and obscure, is, indeed a most important station of that great Divine Society. Some of you have already shown a generous interest in this, and will be pleased to hear from it in any way.

It is the *sole Protestant Congregation* in an ancient and important town which is the residence of a Romish Bishop, and where that communion is dominant, and industrious. This town has also been famous in times past. for its vice and profaneness, and, has still sad remains of this character. Thus, this little Church with its Sunday School is almost the only means by which the pure Gospel comes to a large population of nominal Protestants, and in the midst of deep poverty we are struggling by self-denial and patience to build a becoming place of worship.

On Advent Sunday last, I gave notice in the morning service, that I would preach in the street, that afternoon, and did so, as is hereafter related. This made no small stir; and various classes of persons combined in reviling it, so that even some zealous and devout members of the Church were frightened, and thought that if this was ever proper, it was not so for us, and feared that it might injure the Church.

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I therefore determined that at my usual Wednesday evening lecture, I would discuss this subject ; and, in order that I might get the hearing of those I wished to convince, I had a small hand-bill printed and circulated in these words : “PREACHING :—There will be Divine Service in the Protestant Episcopal Church, this (Wednesday) evening, and a Sermon on the kind of preaching needed for this land and these times. The Service will commence at 7 o’clock. All persons are respectfully invited to attend.”

The appearance of this seemed to make the matter culminate; and it was commonly remarked that it had been generally believed before that the Minister was crazy, but there was no longer any doubt of it. The service, however, was fully attended and the sermon listened to with deep attention. I believe that all who heard it, admitted themselves convinced, but some who should have been convinced were not there to hear. I have since concluded to write this off just as it was preached, and to publish it. It is now modestly submitted to your attention and judgement. “I appeal unto Cæsar.”

THOMAS S. BACON.

Acts. V. 38, 39.—“And now I say unto you, refrain from these men and let them alone ; for if this council or this work be of men, it will come to nought ; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”

Math. V. 11, 12. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven ; for so persecuted they the prophets before you.”

I select from the word of God as the subject of preaching to night, these two passages ; from the Acts of the Apostles 5th Chap. 38th and 39th verses : And, now I say &c.”—and from the Gospel according to St. Matthew 5th Chapter, 11th and 12th verses ; “Blessed are ye, &c.”

Last Sunday morning I gave notice here that since many persons never went to the House of God ; and yet, all men were sinners, Christ had died for their salvation, time was short and judgment approaching, I would preach from the steps of the Courthouse in St. Denis street this afternoon at 3 o’clock. This was no sudden notion, but a step upon which I had re

flected long, conversed with the earnest communicants, and positively resolved. Accordingly I kept this appointment. As some of you were not present at this and might wish to know what occurred, and especially as the fearful enemy of our souls who is "the father of lies," is greatly enraged at whatever is done earnestly for the Holy Gospel of Christ, and will be likely to set in motion falsehoods that he may counteract this—I will give a brief account of what then took place,

When I repaired at 3 o'clock to the place appointed I found but two or three children there. Soon, however, several grown persons came up, and I at once commenced by saying that we would address God in prayer, which I did in the Lord's Prayer. After this, I read the 2d Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, giving an account of the first preaching of the Gospel after the Lord's Ascension, in the streets of Jerusalem. I then again offered prayer in a confession of sins and entreaty for pardon, drawn by memory from the prayers of the Church. By this time a considerable number of persons had assembled, more than are usually seen here, and, most of them, those who seldom or never come here. I then preached to them soberly and earnestly for 20 or 30 minutes from the 38th and 39th verses of the chapter just read: first inviting them to the house of God; then showing that, though when one does something which seems very strange to others, they are apt to think him either knavish or crazy, this could not be thought of me, because I was acting in honest and rational consistency with what I believed; and lastly urging them to consider whether they ought not to imitate those who were converted by the preaching of the Apostles, and whether, if they were not greatly moved and persuaded by what I said, it was not they who were beside themselves. They were then dismissed with a short prayer and blessing.

I bear them honorable witness that, as became so serious a matter, and with a kindness and respect which they thought due to me, they gave sober attention. So men ought to do surely in such a case, and I am confident that the good sense of my fellow-townsmen, and some reverence for the messengers of God will make them do so on all like occasions.

As a general thing, what is done faithfully by the ministers of Christ in his service, does not need vindication. If men cavil, we make no reply, but go on with gentle simplicity and courage and let the truth speak for itself. But when public attention is greatly awakened to such things, and there is evidently an honest misconception of them on the part of many, then, for the cause of Jesus Christ in the world, we his ministers invite you to come and hear our reasons for our conduct. Such I understand to be the case now. It seems that much is said about last Sunday's preaching in the street. Some say that such preaching is strange and unprecedented—that it is in violation of the laws of this Church. Others treat it, or affect to treat it, with ridicule, compare it to the ravings of some crazy fanatic, and even declare that he who does it, by that act proves himself beyond question a lunatic.

Therefore “hear me for my cause.”

First, let me correct one mistake that some have made. Such preaching is *not* contrary to the laws and canons of that part of the Holy Catholic (or Universal) Church in which I am a minister. I speak by positive knowledge of this; those who have said the contrary speak only from their impressions.*

Nor, secondly, is it without precedent. The blessed Reformation was much helped forward in our mother country and mother church by zealous preaching in the open air, to crowds of people all over the land. But to find the like, we have only to go back a hundred years, and consider the case of the Rev. George Whitfield,

* The only restriction of such preaching that can be supposed, is in Canon XIV of 1832, which reads as follows:

“Every minister shall, before all sermons and lectures, and on all other occasions of public worship, use the Book of Common Prayer, as the same is or may be established by the authority of the general convention of this church. And in performing said service, no other prayers shall be used than those prescribed by the said book.”

I believe I can not be mistaken in saying that this canon has been construed by a great majority of the earnest members of the Church, of all parties, under “the rubric of common sense,” to apply only to regular worshiping congregations, and not to forbid ministers *preaching the gospel* as they have opportunity, when such regular worship can not be celebrated. Certainly it makes no *place* unlawful for preaching. (See Dr. Bowman's sermon before the Penn. Conv. of 1855.)

and the Rev. John and Charles Wesley, clergymen of the Church of England. Those men are now acknowledged on all hands to have done great service to the cause of our Savior and King Jesus Christ. Bishops* express regret that they were not countenanced by the dignitaries of the Church in their day instead of being (as we must admit with shame, they were) persecuted by them. The Church had then sunk into great worldliness, and the world in natural proportion, into great vice and irreverence.

The Lord therefore sent such "sons of thunder" as those to "go preach his Gospel."

Mr. Whitfield, especially, is now admired by all zealous Christians as the greatest and most efficient preacher probably since the days of St. Paul. Yet, he actually transgressed the laws and disobeyed the authorities of the Church, mainly in preaching within the parishes of other Clergyman without their consent, (an offence which I apprehend there is little danger of ones committing here.†) In regard to his preaching in the open air I quote from the account of a zealous clergyman of the Church of England, Rev. J. C. Ryle.

"And now we reach the era in his life when he was obliged, by circumstances, to take up a line of conduct as a minister which he probably at one time never contemplated, but which was made absolutely necessary by the treatment he received.

It appears that on arriving at London after his first visit to Georgia, he found the countenances of many of the clergy no longer toward him as they were before. They had taken fright at some expressions in his published letters, and some reports of his conduct in America. They were scandalized at his preaching the doctrine of regeneration in the way that he did, as a thing which many of their parishioners needed. The pulpits of many churches were flatly refused to him. Churchwardens, who had no eyes for heresy and drunkenness, were filled with virtuous indignation about what they called breaches of order. Bishops who could tolerate Arianism and Socinianism, got into a state of ex-

*Among others, the present Bishop of London who is surely no "radical" or fanatic.

† The nearest officiating clergymen of our Church live from two to four days' journey distant, and northwardly there are absolutely none at all for a thousand miles or more.

citement about a man who simply preached the Gospel, and put forth warnings against fanaticism and enthusiasm. In short, Whitefield's field of usefulness within the Church was rapidly narrowed on every side.

The step which seems to have decided Whitefield course of action at this period of his life, was his adoption of open-air preaching. He had gone to Islington, on a Sunday in April, 1739, to preach for the vicar, his friend, Mr. Stonehouse. In the midst of the prayers, the churchwarden came to him and demanded his license for preaching in the London diocese. This, Whitefield of course had not got, any more than any clergyman not regularly officiating in the diocese, has at this day. The upshot of the matter was, that being forbidden to preach in the pulpit, he went outside, after the service, and preached in the churchyard. From that day, he regularly took up the practice of open-air preaching. Wherever there were large open fields around London, wherever there were large bands of idle, church-despising, Sabbath breaking people gathered together, there went Whitefield and lifted up his voice. The Gospel so proclaimed was listened to, and greedily received by hundreds who had never dreamed of visiting a place of worship. In Moorfields, in Hackney Fields, in Mary-le-bone Fields, in May Fair, in Smithfield, on Kennington Common, on Blackheath, Sunday after Sunday, Whitefield preached to admiring maasses. Ten thousand, fifteen thousand, twenty thousand, thirty thousand was computed sometimes to have heard him at once. The cause of pure religion, beyond doubt, was advanced. Souls were plucked from the hands of Satan, as brands from the burning. But it was going much too fast for the Church of those days. The clergy, with very few exceptions, would have nothing to do with this strange preacher. In short, the ministrations of Whitefield in the pulpits of the establishment with an occasional exception, from this time ceased. He loved the Church. He gloried in her Articles and Formularies. He used her Prayer Book with delight. But the Church did not love him, and so lost the use of his services. The plain truth is, the Church of England of that day was not ready for a man like Whitefield. The Church was too much asleep to understand him.

But, whatever may be said of what occurred a century ago, there can be no question of this which I now proceed to quote from a late London publication. Remember that the Church of England does not differ from ours in its rules about those things, unless in being more strict. England is a most conservative country. People there are very fearful of doing anything irreg-

ularly or out of routine. Yet, you will see, they have not lost their common sense in religion.

“The Committee of the City Mission have removed the restriction which prevented their agents from preaching in the streets. Great good has been the result, and the report of that Society deals with the subject at some length. The services held in Greenwich Park are often attended by more than 1,000 persons. At each of the stations near the Caledonian-road, there is an average of 200 hearers, and often three times that number. At Tower Hill, the Mission service has frequently a congregation of 300 persons. There are thirty clergymen of the Church of England, and the ministers of nine congregational chapels, who preach out of doors in London; this number will soon be doubled. The Archbishop of Canterbury has stated his approval of the practice. The Bishop of Winchester in his last Episcopal charge, strongly urges its adoption; and the Bishop of London has given his support to the “Islington Church Home Mission,” a new organization, in which thirty-five clergymen, and as many laymen combine to promote open-air preaching amongst other scriptural and practical means of good. Tent Meetings are held in the suburbs by the Christian Instruction Society. The subject of open-air preaching was favorably received at the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in England, also at the Free Church Assembly in Edinburgh, and by the authority of the body of Independents, as it will be no doubt by the Wesleyan Conference. A Committee, similar to that of the Open-air Mission, is conducting its operations with great benefit in Bristol, and another at Windsor. Others are forming at Liverpool, Manchester, Hammer-smith, and elsewhere. The clergy preach out of doors in Birmingham, Winchester, Tunbridge, Peterborough, Reading, Dover, Cambridge, &c., &c.; and applications are made to the office of the Mission from all parts of Britain, for information and advice which will lead to a further extension of the plan. Even at Boston in the United States of America, the influence has been felt by the example set in London. *From the Second Annual Report of Open-Air Mission.*”

To this, I will also add an extract from a newspaper article lately published by the Rev. Mr. Trench, of Reading in the diocese of Oxford. The first part is occupied with suggestions in regard to the best times, places, and themes of such preaching. He then follows with this :

“I now conclude with a few general remarks. It may be a token of respect, and interesting too to your congregation, if, on com-

mencement, some allusion to open air preaching is made in your sermon at church. It may be shown, firstly, to be Scriptural, and after the example of Christ, His Apostles, and Disciples. Secondly, as being in the fullest agreement both with the letter and spirit of our Church. Thirdly, as being loudly demanded, if the message of salvation is to reach those—especially men—whom the clergyman can so seldom meet, and who never enter any roofed abode to hear the Word of Life.

Latent objections, if any should prevail, may thus be removed; and you will engage much sympathy in your work, and prayer for God's blessing on it.

As to locality, the very best is one close to some frequented thoroughfare, but not exactly on it. Many things may influence the choice of position—*e. g.*, shelter of walls or trees—opportunity for the aged and weak to find rest for their limbs—calls for special efforts in some special place, &c.

Congregations will usually be made up of the three following classes:

1. Of those who attend partly from personal enjoyment of such ministrations, and partly from a laudable desire to strengthen the preacher's hands.

2. Of those who knew of the Service, and from various reasons came for the very purpose of attending it. Every sort of character will be found among this number.

3. Of those, who, being only casual passers by, are led to stop and hear. Surely all these persons may be regarded as most welcome.

No interruptions of any kind have occurred; should they happen, they must be met firmly, but kindly.

I trust that a measure so scriptural, orderly, simple, and effectual as open-air preaching is, may speedily and widely be employed by the clergy of our Church as a good adjunct to their many present labors in behalf of their flocks. Let it be remembered that as such it is proposed, not as a substitute for any other means for advancing the glory of Christ, and promoting the welfare of our souls."

Our own American Bishops have also expressed their approval of this.*

* I confess that I say this from an *impression* of having read or heard this from good authority, and that with the few means of reference and little time in my power, I am unable to quote anything directly to this point. The fact that they have known of this being so extensively practiced and recommended with such authority in the Mother Church, and that they have not uttered any disapproval of, or warning against it, is some evidence itself. Perhaps Question 3. of the Committee on "The Memorial &c.," must have had this thing in view.

Having thus got rid of the notion, that this kind of preaching is either against Church law or without example, let us now inquire into the propriety of it in itself.

God has a society of his people in this world called the Church. There are certain officers of this who have a commission *from Him* to speak to assemblies of men, to assemblies not merely of their brethren but of any men whom they can get to hear them. This is *preaching*. He has said "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This, they must do [and see now whether I do not speak the common sense of the matter,] according to the laws of their respective churches, and where these are silent, according to their judgment of what may seem the most effective way, and especially according to the divine precepts and examples which they find in the New Testament. That is, they must study how Christ and his holy apostles preached, and what the circumstances were, in which they did it. And then they must study the circumstances in which they themselves preach, and notice where they agree with and where they differ from those, and then act upon the same principle as adjusted to the different state of things. I think there can be no doubt that this is correct.

We must however in this our judgment carefully exclude from the circumstances which should keep us far from exactly following these examples in any practice, the fact that many people find fault with it, even that *must* do. For, so they did in those times. It was when, "the most respectable and influential men" in Jerusalem were greatly scandalized at the preaching of the Apostles, that those words of Gamaliel cited as a text were called forth. And let us mark those words well: "And now I say unto you refrain from those men and let them alone; for if this council or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

Nor is it any such difference of circumstances, that the Apostolic mode of preaching will bring ridicule upon the Gospel and cause it or its ministers to be contemptuously spoken of. For, so it did then, and so the Lord forewarned us it should. And he

did not speak of this as a grievous calamity, to be borne with patience, but as something to exult in. As he says in these words :

“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven ; for so persecuted they the prophets before you.”

All this shows plainly that the Ministers of Christ must in their preaching do what *is really* reasonable and dignified without being frightened from it because *people say* it is not, but rather expecting that they will, in proportion, as they are worldly and irreligious. If anything is really senseless and ridiculous, (such as incoherent raving, howling above the natural voice, or wild antics,) they should not do it, whether people approve or no. But, it is another thing to talk seriously and earnestly and reasonably to their fellow men whenever they can get their hearing and attention—to “speak forth the words of truth and soberness,” though some one do cry out “Paul, thou art beside thyself.” No one now doubts that this man and his fellow Apostles were great and heroic persons. Yet, in their time, they were covered with abuse and ridicule ; they were literally hooted and pelted out of the towns which they visited and in whose streets they preached.

Now, to examine these examples, it is certain that Our Lord Jesus Christ himself preached often in the open air, stopping wherever he found a company of men assembled, to address them. But he has given us in the Acts of the Apostles an exact account of how his first ministers understood and obeyed his commandment to “preach the Gospel” ; and there we shall find the examples for their successors. Let us study them, and compare those times with our own, and thus learn what is “The sort of preaching required for this land and this time.”

“Ah,” says some one, “those were different times from these—Such preaching would have done then.” So they were different times from these in this respect, that brave zeal for Christ was more strange and more dangerous then, than now. But, if you mean that Christians were then of a different spirit, were more honest and earnest in their religion, than now ;—ah, that is true ! But, would you not like to see such times return ? And yet, how

can we see this, but by returning to their spirits and deeds? Much is said in these days of "Apostolic Churches" and "An Apostolic Ministry"; and, surely there can be nothing better in their way. Let us then follow the *Apostolic examples*. Do you ever read the Acts of the Apostles? If so, are you not at times struck with the heroic devotion of those first Christians, and persuaded that they were right, and that we ought to be like them?

The Apostles began to preach in the city of Jerusalem, just where they might expect to be treated with disrespect and, even violence; for, the Lord had been murdered there by the people not two months before. They began preaching in the streets and public places, and especially in the Temple which, was the greatest place of resort. Remember, that this was not their own place of worship, but, rather that of their enemies. What was that to them? It was there, they could best get the hearing of strangers to the Gospel and rebels against God. The first effect of their preaching too, was that, though God gave witness for them as his messengers in that, though unlearned men, they were able to preach in all the different languages of the strangers then in the city, yet men were merely astonished, and some said that they were drunk. Yet, they kept on preaching, and 3000 persons were converted and joined the Church that day.

Why did they thus begin and continue preaching? Simply because they meant to obey the Lord Christ. They believed in God, and Heaven, and Hell—that, every human soul was of itself guilty and lost, and that the precious blood of Jesus Christ availed, and alone availed, to cleanse and save it; and, they acted accordingly. So, whenever they could find any of these wretched sinners assembled, in the streets or other places of concourse, they addressed them,—soberly, but earnestly and powerfully.

Now, apply this to our case. In this country and time there is a part of the week which all agree belongs peculiarly to religion—the Lord's day. On that day the Church in its consecrated place celebrates divine worship with these majestic forms of Common Prayer, in which we have just addressed God, and preaches to those who come to attend it.

But there are others who never come here, whether from a

fear that there is no room for them, or from carelessness, or prejudice, or hatred of the truth. Can they be let alone? Their very neglect of the Church is their greatest misfortune, and should move the pity of its ministers. These too, are the creatures of God our Maker "who will have *all men* to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." The blood of Christ bought them from Hell on Calvary. Many of them are no doubt dreadfully vicious. God's law is horribly broken by them. "Rivers of waters *should* run down our eyes because men keep not God's law." But will we spend nothing but tears upon this? Will we refuse to *do* anything to remedy this? No, we will go where we can get these men's ^{ears} hearing, and talk soberly and solemnly to them, and ask them to Church, and, preach to them the forgiveness of sins through Christ. And, from this we will not allow any scorn of men to frighten us. Is not that just what the Apostles did?

Now, let us follow them further. In chap. IV of the Acts, we find that they were arrested by the authorities on the pretence of their disturbing the peace. But, they, though most peaceable citizens refused to disobey the commandment of Christ by ceasing to preach, and were let off with only some threats. So they went and reported all this to their fellow Christians. Mark how these acted in regard to the boldness and the dangers of their ministers. They joined in an earnest prayer to God to protect them from their enemies saying, v. 29; "And now Lord behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word."

A few days afterward their powerful enemies had them again arrested and put in prison, v. 19, 20. "But the Angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them forth and said, Go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." So when they were sent for to the prison the next day they were preaching again in the Temple. Being forthwith arrested and brought before the council and asked, v. 29. 30: "Did not we strictly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other Apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than man."

It was on this occasion, while the Council were plotting how murder the Apostles by law, that Gamaliel, one of their number made this truly wise remark, v. 38, 39; "And now I say unto you, refrain from those men and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be God ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." And the history continues, v. 40, 41, "To him they agreed; and when they had called the Apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the Council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

Now, what did these great ministers of Christ do in all this, but earnestly believe the gospel, and wherever they could find the hearts of men, strike boldly at them with it, and receive with meek joy the scornful abuse and ill-treatment forced upon them?

By doing the same St. Stephen placed his name first on the roll of the "Noble army of martyrs," being beaten to death with stones by a furious mob.

One of the accessories in this shocking murder, one Saul of Tarsus, was afterwards converted and became the great St. Paul, the first of Christian Ministers. Upon his conversion he began the same sort of preaching. He first went into the synagogues of the Jews. Notice that these were not the religious edifices of the Christians, but rather of their opposers, and this was therefore something more "fanatical" than has yet been attempted here. He went and preached there as well as in other public places because he could there get the hearing of his fellow-men.

The rest of the Acts is taken up with an account of the preaching of St. Paul and it is all like this. He traveled all over Western Asia and Southern Europe, preaching in the streets of the towns; not merely going, as I did on Sunday, among his neighbors, the people of his peculiar charge, and who had some respect for Christianity, but among strangers and violent adherents of other religions. For instance, in Lystra, a town of Asia Minor, as he was preaching in the street, he performed a miracle, upon which the idolatrous people took him for a God, and were about to worship him. Yet, afterwards with the fickleness of a mob, they

stoned him and dragged his corpse (as they supposed) out of the town. Notwithstanding, he afterwards went back to this place xiv, 22. "Confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

At Thyatira, Paul and Silas were for the same thing shamefully beaten, and put in prison in the stocks,. At Thessalonica their preaching made a great uproar, so that a mob collected and searched for them, crying out, "Those that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also." So when St. Paul preached at Athens in all the places of public resort, "some mocked." Such indeed was all of this great man's preaching, and so was it generally received.

At the close of his life, he went back to Jerusalem, expecting to meet with ill-treatment and, indeed foretold of it by persons whom God inspired to prophesy in several places where he stopped on his way. The writer of the Acts, one of the companions of his journey, tells us with exquisite simplicity, that on one of these occasions, xxi, 12, 13, "When we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, 'What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart, for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus?'" He was not moved from his duty by their weakness or their distress. He, indeed, relates of one of his persecutions, 2 Tim. iv, 16 : "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."

It seems then, that even in those times the minister of Christ had some times to stand alone, deserted even by his brethern in the Lord. Well then, does he say to one of his successors in the proclaiming of the Gospel—to all of them—yes, to *me*, (2 Tim. ii 1, 3,) "Thou therefore my son * * * endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

From all this history, I draw two main inferences :—First, That whenever the first and best preachers could get from their fellow-men, who were by nature children of God's wrath, a hearing for their message of pardon and peace from him, they went

and preached *there*. The same things exist now, and here. Perhaps I should not overstate if I were to say that Natchitoches is at least as wicked a place as Jerusalem was in those times. However that may be, there certainly are guilty men here who never come to church to hear the Gospel. Then, I must go on the Lord's day and preach to them where I can best find them. There are no miracles now nor are any of the Lord's heralds directly inspired, as they were then. But that (as all agree) was done to prove that what they said was God's truth, and to complete the revelation. But, that men are guilty and must repent and believe in Christ, is just as true now as then, and should be preached as earnestly, and as great pains taken to call men's attention to it.

And, this reminds us how strangely men lose their common sense when they oppose an honest zeal in religion. If, as the only effective way to give notice and to bring men to this place to hear what they need to hear but would otherwise neglect—a plain hand bill is printed and circulated—they think it a shocking and insane proceeding. If, however, the same thing is done to give notice of a horse race,* it is all very well. Why is this? Is there something essentially irreligious in types and ink? Or, is it that the horse race is the more important matter? or that, being more likely to be neglected, it needs more urgent notice?

My second general inference is, that it should have no force to dissuade me from such "an *in*-corrupt following of the Apostles." that this may be mis-represented, ridiculed, and reviled. There is no objection of this kind which can be raised now that was not in still stronger force then. Are we in the presence of a powerful and dominant superstition? So were they. Are we liable to be misunderstood and slandered? Much more were they. Are we certain to be called crazy, to be laughed and scoffed at? Why hear what St. Paul says: 1 Cor. iv, 1 &c. "For I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death, for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake * * * we are despis-

*One of our chief public institutions is a race course with its usual adjuncts.

ed. Even unto this present hour, we suffer both hunger and thirst and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless ; being persecuted, we suffer it ; being defamed, we entreat. We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

Suppose it had been said to them (especially after their first preaching in the public places had given a wide notice of the matter,) by some of their more timid brethren: "Do not preach in the streets of this hostile Jerusalem. Have a room open by yourselves for any to come and hear you who will. If they will not come, still you will have done your duty and the consequences must rest on them. But, do not bring ridicule upon the Church. You will be whipped in the streets and laughed at by all the wealthy and respectable people. They will compare you to the fanatical false prophets of a few years ago, and pay no more attention to what you say than they did to them." Suppose I say that such things had been said to the Apostles (and perhaps they were, and that they had yielded to those arguments. Where would the Church be now ?

And, shall we, who enter into those holy and heroic apostolic labors, shrink from the like because we have the same dangers to encounter only in a much lower degree? Can we do otherwise than expect this in proportion as we are faithful, and to "rejoice" in it as Our Lord has commanded us, saying : "for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you."

No, when the world opposes this simple and natural boldness of preaching, it is from the natural enmity of the unconverted heart to the holy rebukes of the Gospel. And, when Christians oppose it, this is from timidity and want of faith, a shrinking from "the offence of the cross." And yet it should, be our greatest glory to be persecuted for Christ's name-sake. This cannot be too often repeated to us, "Blessed are ye, &c.

Has this blessing ceased upon the earth? Has this alone of those glorious beatitudes withdrawn from our reach? When all about us are perfect Christians there will indeed be no occasion for this joy. But then too, there will be no more need of what

calls out reviling. As this is yet far from being true with us, we may aspire to this high honor, though in a less degree than our great predecessors in the proclaiming of the Gospel.

So, until then, as a fair day offers and circumstances favor, I shall continue such preaching. Oh that it may not be so ill-received or so opposed as to call for a repetition here of a sentence once pronounced upon an ancient town; "Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Consider now whether in any enlightened Christian land, there is a community that needs such bold and earnest measures more than this? The very difficulty and unpleasantness of such measures is a proof of their necessity. We see here all vices flourishing with horrid luxuriance, the Lord's day profaned, the usual means of grace neglected, the Church forgotten, riches adored, God denied and insulted, Satan served with zeal, and creatures worshipped, the Gospel unheeded, Christ neglected and blasphemed, and Hell opening its dreadful jaws for the multitude.

Shall we not then go after these, our unhappy fellow-men? Shall not wisdom "cry without," shall not she "utter her voice in the streets?"

Shall not the servants of the Lord go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in to the heavenly feast? Oh, indeed, the time for all this is short, and "All the voices of time and eternity cry in our hearts, What thou doest, do quickly."

For one, I am positively resolved to do my duty in this; and no timid treachery where I have a right to expect support, or any opposition whether of threats, or calumny, or scoffing, can sway me from my determination. "I have enlisted for the war." What if my neighbors and townsmen do ridicule and revile me, so long as I know that I love them and am seeking their good? Then let them cover me with the filth of their abuse. I will wait a little while until my King whom I serve and for whom I suffer, "shall overcome at the last," and I shall follow his victorious chariot wheels, dressed in a bright robe of innocence and triumph.

